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ABSTRACT

The violence women experience in battering is both physical and psychological. A study in 1980 found that 1 in 10 women was hit, kicked, beaten, punched and terrorized by her husband or partner in Canada. Children living in battered homes may suffer a higher risk of direct physical or sexual abuse and many are neglected. Some progress has been made in an attempt to improve protection of battered women. The greatest concern of these women is the ineffectiveness of court orders instructing batterers to keep peace and have no contact with their wives or children. Violence is learned behavior. Men who batter make a series of rational decisions about violence including whether to hit their wives where it shows or punch them a little. There are 45 programs in existence across Canada for men who batter; counseling is provided together with group and family therapy that develops a network connecting these people after completion of official therapy sessions. Goals for battered women include ensuring that criminal justice programs are used to expand women's options; that those in the justice system increase their understanding of wife battering; and that criminal justic agents recognize that justice for battered women as well as strength of the justice system is ultimately rooted in the community. (ABL)

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BATTERED WOMEN, THEIR SIBLINGS AND BATTERERS IN CANADA

[Lawrie M. Edinboro]

I was appointed to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women in 1986, by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney P.C., M.P., for a three year term.

The Council is made up of twenty-six women and one man. I am that male Person. The twenty-seven council members are part-time personnel and serve on three committees viz. social, economic and legal.

The Advisory Council commissioned a study on preventing wife battering and the book **"BATTERED BUT NOT BEATEN"** was produced and I will talk about this and some of the findings.

Just a few years ago, wife battering was a laughing matter for some members of parliament. On May 12th, 1982, when this problem was discussed in the House of Commons as a serious and wide spread reality suffered by one out of ten Canadian women -- laughter echoed through parliament.

Canadians took note of this grave situation and generated a public outcry of enormous proportions to the extent that, policy makers were pushed into translating this concern into action.

Through the eyes of women, the subsequent report on wife battering to the House of Commons pointed to the richness of exploring an understanding of wife battering, beyond the understanding based on incidence.

It is essential to go beyond the incidence of the phenomenon and look at the seriousness of the situation.

Indeed, it is definitely very serious because this type of violence has the potential to affect all families, as well as all women with intimate relationships outside a family context. Do remember no family is entirely immune because wife battering is learned behaviour which is reinforced by our social institutions. Also wife battering as a social issue has overtones in every community.

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However, the building of pressure by societal's re-action against it, reveals the growing intolerance of all people to violence, particularly to systematic violence directed against one group --- WOMEN.

Wife battering is not just the result of an isolated argument that had gotten out of hand. According to a British study of wife abuse, more than three quarters of the women surveyed reported physical assaults usually not preceded by verbal arguments. Neither is wife battering to be confused with sado-masochistic behaviours which is done by two consenting adults. It is not playful, fun or sexually stimulating for the woman.

Women Report that Being Battered Is (1) feeling confused, feeling dead inside, feeling worthless, having no friends --- not even one that you can call when you're feeling really low.
(2) It is not knowing when he will turn on the children --- always feeling jumpy, never knowing when it will start again.
(3) It is being afraid all the time --- not just of him but of everything --- not really trusting anyone.
(4) It is feeling guilty and in some indefinable way responsible, even though you are the one who is being beaten.

You see, the violence women experience when they are battered is therefore a combination of two types of violence; the physical --- directly initiated by their husbands or male companion in the form of constant denigration, taunts, purposeful inconsistencies or threats and the psychological --- when these women try to get help it is too often just not there --- they then ask the question of themselves, What do I do next?

Women who are battered and look for help learn very quickly that violence is an integral part, not just of certain family interactions, but of our whole society and that violence in the family is indirectly supported by practices and policies which condone some violence by husbands against wives.

Here are some statistics:

Just a few years ago, Canadians were shocked by the statistic that one in ten women is hit, kicked, beaten, punched and terrorized by her husband or partner. That figure, taken from a ground breaking study published in 1980 by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW), painted a bleak picture of a crisis that demanded immediate attention, so by 1982 the response --- from the public, governments and parliament --- was an all-out effort to end wife battering in our society.

Now, seven years later, the CACSW has published a book "BATTERED BUT NOT BEATEN: PREVENTING WIFE BATTERING IN CANADA". Written by Linda MacLeod, the author of the 1980 study. It reviews the vast strides our society has made in relieving the suffering and injustice of women who have been battered. It embraces the complexity of wife battering by focusing on all dimensions of abuse --- physical, psychological, emotional and economic. " BATTERED BUT NOT BEATEN" adopts a multi-faceted approach to the problem, examining it through the eyes of battered women, their children, the men who batter, transition-house workers, and most importantly, the report suggests various proposals for action to move us closer to a future which does not include domestic violence.

Briefly, in 1985, statistics from 110 transition houses showed that 20,211 women were given accommodation. Of that number, 15,730 were admitted explicitly because they were physically, psychologically or sexually abused by their husbands or partners. In addition, almost all houses were forced to turn away a large number of women: on average, they turned down one out of every two requests for shelter. As staggering as these figures are, it must be recognized that not all women go to transition homes. The study estimates that almost one million women may be battered each year.

Although it is evident that the brutality characteristic of cases of wife battering is the most repugnant aspect of violence against women in the home, the study graphically portrays the emotional and psychological environment in which violence occurs. Battered women tell of degradation, emptiness, the theft of control over their lives, and their misplaced hopes for their future. Reflecting the fact that many batterers use money as another way to reinforce women's inferior status.

Here is a definition of wife battering:

"Wife battering is the loss of dignity, control and safety, as well as the feeling of powerlessness and entrapment, experienced by women who are the direct victims of ongoing or repeated physical, psychological, economic, sexual and/or verbal violence or who are subjected to persistent threats or the witnessing of such violence against their children, other relatives, friends, pets and/or cherished possessions, by their boyfriends, husbands, live-in lover, ex-husbands or ex-lovers. The term "wife battering" will also be understood to encompass the ramifications of the violence for the woman, her children, her friends and relatives and for society as a whole."

Although a broad range of women are battered in Canada every year, in 1985 most women who stayed in transition homes were young, fourteen percent were under twenty-one and fifty-six percent between twenty-one and thirty-four years of age. Transition-house workers also report that more pregnant women and teenaged women --- who are living at home are battered by their boyfriends and are now coming to the shelters. Another twenty-four percent were between thirty-five and forty-nine and six percent were fifty years or older. In most cases, violence was not new --- over half the women had left their partners on a previous occasion because of violence.

Data on women and their children staying in the shelters showed when examined, that most women who come to transition houses in 1985 were poor when living with their husbands. Forty-three percent had a family income of less than $ 10,000.00 a year and thirty-two percent had an annual income of between $ 10,000.00 and $ 20,000.00. Many of these women expressed concern about their financial situation if they left their husbands. Many could be hindered in a job search by low education or lack of training: seventy percent attended college or a technical school and only two percent had a university degree.

As the above statistics suggest, the obstacles facing battered women who seek shelter in transition houses are overwhelming. Some groups of battered women e.g. immigrant, aboriginal, rural, teenaged, disabled women and women living on military bases --- face particular problems including geographic, cultural or linguistic isolation, six percent of women in shelters were immigrant, fifteen were aboriginal. Language barriers posed a problem in forty-seven percent of the houses. Because of lack of programs and services in rural and isolated regions, battered women in these areas face additional problems when trying to leave the violent situation.

There is not doubt that many changes have taken place in the shelter movement across Canada. The number of transition houses has more than tripled from seventy one shelters in 1979 to two hundred and sixty four in 1987. Beyond that, there have been attempts to provide accommodation for aboriginal and immigrant women and their children. Shelters have increased the scope of services they offer, with many now providing family counselling, public education, and parenting programs. Yet, this progress must be weighed against the need for predictable, stable funding, better wages for shelter workers and more counselling, referral, information, outreach and follow-up programs.

One of the most profound changes in the past seven years in service delivery is the growth of programs for children in battered homes. Many of these children are withdrawn, some are suicidal, while others become violent toward the people around them. Often, these children feel constant and overwhelming guilt that they're the cause of the violence. So, in order to address these needs, more than fifty percent of the houses have programs for children but are hampered by a chronic shortage of funds, low salaries for child-care workers and inadequate resources for counselling.

Significant reforms in the Criminal Justice System have clearly announced society's unwillingness to tolerate wife battering. Since 1980, major changes in Federal Legislation have occurred: police have adopted a more aggressive policy of laying charges: Most Canadian Police education and training centres include a segment on wife battering and multi-disciplinary teams of police trained to handle wife-battering cases that exist in most communities. Impressive though these responses have been, many people hope that long-term criminal justice programs will be developed that will ultimately lead to the prevention of wife battering.

Here is a relevation:

Wife battering often occurs during pregnancy --- only one transition house did ask whether the woman was beaten during pregnancy, others volunteered the information, nevertheless, eighty percent of the women answered **"YES"**.

Richard Gellies in his book "The Violent Home" ---Sage--- Beverley Hills California in 1972, found that ten of forty-four women he interviewed reported being beaten when pregnant.

J. J. Gaylord in his book "Battered Wives" identifies pregnancy as the factor which most often precipitates violence.

Suzanne Steinmetz in her book "The Cycle of Violence" Assertive Aggressive and Abusive Family Interaction, Praeger, New York in 1977, stated that pregnancy is one of the major incitements leading to violence.

This clipping bears out the point of assaults on pregnant women by their husbands or other male companion.

The Chatham Daily News, Wed., April 26, 1989 — 11

Beat pregnant wife

GUELPH, Ont. (CP) — A man who beat his 8½-month pregnant wife when she said she was in labor and asked to be taken to hospital was convicted of three counts of assault Tuesday.

Provincial court Judge Bruce Payne, who remanded John Cross in custody for sentencing May 30, described the attack as "nauseating."

Court was told that last month, Michelle Cross tried to call her sister for help because she thought she was about to give birth. Her husband had refused to take her to hospital — located about four blocks from the couple's home.

The couple's first child was born two days later, court heard.

The information I am about to give you may surprise you and frankly I found it alarming.

Many transition house workers spoke of the web of silence around upper and middle class wife battering. These women frequently believe that wife battering is found among the poor, the lower income and the unemployed who don't know better and the upper and middle class women will not admit that the phenomenon has infested their homes. However, they may seek medical attention or look for legal solutions more readily than lower income women. At this time, outside channels do not keep accurate figures on wife abuse, so these women become invisible victims.

I have been asked where do wife batterers come from? How does it start? Well it is known that fifty percent of husbands of the battered women interviewed by transition house workers admitted that they had been beaten as children compared to one third of the women. Also, fifty-five percent of the husbands were employed, thirty-four percent did have criminal records and the husband's educational level tended to be grade eleven.

A study done by **the Osborne House Workers in Winnipeg, Manitoba,** in 1977 found that wife batterers were disproportionately represented in three occupations --- truck drivers, police officers and doctors.

Pollster, Louis Harris found that five percent more college educated people approved of slapping their wives on appropriate occasions than the national average did. He concluded that if anything the middle class is more prone toward physical assault than the poor.

Margaret May in her book **"Violence in the Family"** A Historical Perspective wrote about the feelings of upper and middle class women who are battered and I quote --- "Most of us don't want to break up our homes if finances are not our problem. There is such a stigma attached to this problem especially in the upper and middle classes that the real need seems to be --- go somewhere to get advice and counselling without a lot of red tape. **Calling the police is out of the question.** Why should a woman become poverty stricken without the house she has tended for many years with her life style drastically altered because of a husband or other man abusing her?"

Here is another quote --- "I put up with not only physical abuse but all kinds of abuses because I have six children to care for but men who abuse their wives are in a class by themselves, really they are indeed and believe me, only women know the real story, men seem to think women have no rights."

You might ask how much wife battering is there in Canada? There has been no national survey in Canada that I am aware of to determine the incidence of unreported or untreated causes of wife abuse but what is known from transition house statistics in 1978 is a total of 9,668 women stayed in 47 transition houses or shelters across Canada. In 1979, the number increased to seventy one but since there were only that number of houses or shelters across Canada, which accept battered women, it is estimated that about 15,000 women would stay in these places annually. A further estimate suggests that if transition homes existed across Canada, at least 24,000 Canadian women would request help from them because they were battered by their husbands or other male companions.

It is useful to point out that between 1979 to 1987 there were 193 transition houses or shelters established across Canada and in the post 1987 year that number has increased to 264.

Children of Battered Homes:

In this situation, there are linkages with many forms of violence both inside and outside the family context. Increasingly, it is being recognized that the problems of the children are the problems of the parents. We must look toward prevention and so to the children of battered women if we want to reduce the number significantly. Community shelter workers have expressed a desire to reach out to these children because they have so many needs. They are sad and angry if their mothers are in shelters. They would have been uprooted from school and friends so they are now lonely, bewildered, confused and feel life is not worth this kind of treatment to anyone.

Children living in battered homes may suffer a higher risk of direct physical or sexual abuse and many are neglected.

In one study of 630 children who stayed at "Win House", a shelter in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1985 showed that eighty-seven percent of children 3 to 18 years of age were found to be abused or neglected.

Some mothers are virtually forced into neglecting their children by men who demand full time attention themselves, or who "numb" the woman with serious violence to the extent that care of other family members suffer. Children in abusive homes learn to expect unpredictable criticism, abuse, neglect and cope as best they can. Also, they are terrified of being abandoned.

Many become suicidal, withdrawn and others become violent toward people around them. These children feel such overwhelming guilt that they tell themselves that they are the cause of the violence in the home. Perhaps if a social worker or other concerned person informed the parents what battering is doing to the children, may be, just may be, this is the only thing that can bring those parents to look at what the final result of the violence is doing --- ruining their children's lives not just their own.

The Hope of Battered Women for their Children:

The primary hope of battered women is that their children will escape the violence and that the battering cycle of their parents will not be repeated in their lives. The needs of their children are usually paramount in the minds of battered women. Most of them feel tremendous guilt about what their children have endured as a result of the trauma of being in a battered home and they agonize over how these experiences will effect their futures.

In transition houses in Canada, eighty percent of them provide some counselling services for resident children, usually by crisis workers who also work with the mothers, but alas, only twenty-nine percent are able to provide this service to all children. Those who stayed with them --- twenty-eight percent provided more counselling as a follow up after leaving these houses. Seventy-five percent provide some organized activity for children either through a child care worker or a crisis centre who work with the mothers. In forty percent of the houses this program was provided for almost all the children. Sixty-five percent of the houses provided a play area for children inside or outside the house. Fifty-one percent of houses provided a parenting program to offer general information on childhood developmental stages, advice on coping with different types of behaviours and information on nutrition.

The importance of non-threatening parental courses geared to the needs of battered women is important because too many parenting courses target middle class women and do not deal with such basic issues as valuing the child and nutrition. Parenting courses should not be used as tools to threaten or coerce battered women by making them fear that they would lose their children unless they attend.

Advocates for Battered Women

Everyone has demanded changes to the Criminal Justice System, so in January 1980, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women recommended that any direction for change in the Legislation should be guided by certain principles: (a) that assault is a crime whether it occurs inside or outside of the home. (b) victims of assault have a right to protection (c) that women who want to leave a violent situation have a right to be given the assistance to do so (d) that the community has an obligation to (1) do everything possible to protect its members from violence regardless of sex, marital status, or where the violence takes place (2) to encourage long range education through educational programs which do not perpetuate an image of women as being dependant (3) that the long and short term interests of women who are battered must be considered in any proposed solution or change (4) that any proposed changes to reduce the incidental effects of wife battering be developed in conjunction with women's groups who work in the field e.g. transition house workers and also battered women who have recuperated sufficiently to give input.

Here is a statement of a battered woman:

"I have thought so many times about calling the police. If the truth were known, I have thought about it for years to teach him a lesson, to make him see what he is doing but I always figured it would do more harm than good. My husband works as a security guard. In his contract it states that he cannot have a criminal record. So I call the police and bang he is out of a job and jobs are not so easy to come by. Then, where are we? Things will just get worse and we will have no money. He will start drinking more. He'll be more angry at me and he'll hit me more. So where is the sense in calling the police?"

Some progress has been made in an attempt to improve protection of battered women. The greatest concern of these women is the ineffectiveness of court orders instructing batters to keep the peace and have no contacts with their wives or children. In the province of Alberta, the Law Society is considering implementing a common wording format for all restraining orders. The police are now taking court orders more seriously and reacting more decisively when a man disobeys a court's order.

Implicit in the criminal justice initiatives related to wife battering, is the assertion that men who batter are responsible for their actions. It has been pointed out that men who attend group counselling classes go because they have to --- because of a court's order. This pressure is needed to keep the group past their usual tolerance level for self confrontation.

Now violence is learned behaviour. Men who batter make a series of rational decisions about violence including whether to hit their wives where it shows or punch them a little. For your information, there are forty-five programs in existence across Canada for men who batter --- counselling is provided together with group and family therapy that develop a network that connect these people after completing official therapy sessions.

There are three major goals for battered women --- (1) there is a desire to ensure that criminal justice programs are being developed and used in such a way that women's options will be expanded not narrowed. The system must protect women and also look very closely at the practice of charging women with contempt of court when they do not want to testify against their partners.

(2) That through the dissemination of information, judges, crown attorneys and lawyers will make a concerted effort to increase their understanding of wife battering, become more sensitized to the needs of battered women through more appropriate sentencing of batterers, more contact with those women prior to court appearances, less aggressive treatment in court, fewer delays and consider all court options.

(3) That the criminal justice agents recognize that justice for battered women as well as strength of the criminal justice system is ultimately rooted in the community.

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